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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2800  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4210  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9973  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1868  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001784

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/07/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NP](#)  
SUBJECT: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS -- A LONG AND  
DIFFICULT ROAD

REF: KATHMANDU 1744

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Nicholas Dean. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

#### Summary

1. (C) On July 5, a team visiting from the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) told Charge and Emboffs that ideal election preparations to a constituent assembly would likely take at least one year from the time the Government of Nepal (GON) begins planning. The IFES team conceded, however, that credible elections could be possible by the GON's proposed March/April 2007 election date. End Summary.

#### Elections Could Take A Year

2. (C) The IFES representatives were concerned that many in Nepal were calling for elections as soon as possible, but that the planning and logistics do not yet exist. The team suggested that the political parties were willing to accept a "not very perfect" election in order to hold it quickly. Vasu Mohan, IFES South Asia Representative based in New Delhi, explained that a credible voter registration would take some months.

#### Confusion About Electoral System

3. (C) The GON still needs to decide what type of system it wants to have for constituent assembly elections. IFES told us that Nepal was seriously considering moving from a first past the post electoral system to a proportional representation system, and IFES was providing information about different proportional representation systems. Dr. Jorgen Elklit, an electoral systems design specialist, said that it would "not be too difficult for Nepal to put something together that would work."

#### Complete Paralysis In Election Commission

4. (C) The IFES team stated that there was "complete paralysis" at the Election Commission. Not only were the

Election Commissioners largely absent, but the bureaucrats were worried that they might lose their positions under an Interim Constitution. The IFES South Asia Representative said that the political leaders did not trust the Election Commissioners, who were viewed as Royal appointees. IFES reported that the workers in the Election Commission were all still reporting to work, although they were not actually doing anything -- simply waiting for direction from the GON. IFES continues its work with the bureaucrats in the Election Commission since it is likely the GON would need to draw upon the Commission's institutional capacity even if the GON were to establish a parallel umbrella structure for constituent assembly elections.

#### PM Calls On Election Commissioner To Resign

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15. (C) Media reported on July 7 that the Prime Minister had asked for the Chief Election Commissioner, Keshav Raj Rajbhandari, to resign. According to press reports, if Rajbhandari chose not to resign, the GON would pursue impeachment. News reports indicate that Rajbhandari has not yet resigned. Manohar Bhattarai, Spokesperson for the Parliament Secretariat, told us that no impeachment case had been filed on July 7.

#### Comment

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16. (C) The GON has officially asked for UN monitoring of constituent assembly elections (reftel). The international community needs to beef up technical support to the GON and the Election Commission to prepare for the elections the GON proposes to hold in March/April 2007.

DEAN